



Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:

CAROL O. BIONDI
PATRICIA CURRY, VICE CHAIR
ANN FRANZEN
SUSAN F. FRIEDMAN
HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
REV. CECIL L. MURRAY
STEVEN M. OLIVAS, ESQ, VICE CHAIR
TINA PEDERSEN, LCSW, VICE CHAIR
MARTHA TREVINO POWELL
SANDRA RUDNICK
STACEY SAVELLE
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, CHAIR
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **December 1, 2008**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Tina Pedersen
Patricia Curry	Sandra Rudnick
Ann Franzen	Stacey Savelle
Susan Friedman	Adelina Sorkin
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Martha Trevino Powell
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Trula J. Worthy-Clayton
	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Helen Kleinberg
Rev. Cecil Murray

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Sorkin, Chair.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made by Marjorie Shelvy, Attorney at Law, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Government Benefits; Sharon Balmer, Equal Justice Works Fellow, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles; Mitch Mason, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS); Kaitlyn Kim, DCFS Intern; Art Mayfield, Probation Department, and Madelyn Gordon, Grandparents as Parents; Nancy Castillas, DCFS.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda for the December 1, 2008 General Meeting was unanimously approved after a proper motion.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Trish Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services, provided an update on the following:

- Director Ploehn informed the Commission that she had attended the Katie A LOG this morning at USC along with Marvin Southard, Director of Mental Health and Miguel Santana, Deputy Chief Executive Officer. At least 250 people from all County Departments were present to kick off the new five-year Katie A. Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors on October 14, 2008. This was the first meeting for those responsible for the implementation of the Plan in an efficient and effective manner. The participants are middle to high level managers who will in turn will talk to DMH and DCFS staff over the next several months and obtain feedback as to how to make this to work best and get the needed services to children.
- Director Ploehn updated the Commission on the Georgetown Project. She, Judge Nash, Los Angeles Superior Court, Chief Taylor from Probation Department, and other County Managers from Department of Mental Health (DMH), and DCFS, went to Washington, D.C. for their first meeting on the Georgetown Project. The collaborative between DCFS, Probation and the Juvenile Court is designed to develop and implement strategies to prevent children in the child welfare system from crossing-over to Probation or the juvenile justice system; and to ensure that children crossing-over to the juvenile justice system receive the same services as those in the child welfare system. The Los Angeles Team represents one of seven teams from across the country involved in the project. The two year demonstration project is being implemented and tested in SPA 6. The Team members include: Director Ploehn, Chief Taylor, Judge Nash and senior level managers from DMH, DCFS, and Probation, as well as a youth and parent representative that have a history in both DCFS and Probation. The Breakthrough Series Collaborative Model was utilized to form the team. Meetings will be held once or twice a month.

The Commission asked how best to give input to the Project Team. Director Ploehn invited suggestions and feedback from the Commission regarding potential "Test of Change," and how to best achieve the goals of the test. The Commission expressed an extreme interest in participating in the "Test of Change" projects. The Commission was reminded that Chief Taylor welcomed the inclusion of the Commission in the Georgetown Project during his presentation at the November 3, 2008 Special Commission Meeting. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton volunteered to attend the meetings and represent the Commission. The Commission recommended that Director Ploehn include Commissioners on e-mails from the team as it relates to the "Test of Change".

Action

The motion by Commissioner Pedersen, was seconded by Commissioner Worthy-Clayton and unanimously carried, to create an Ad Hoc Committee to work collaboratively with DCFS, DMH, and Probation on the Georgetown Project. Commissioners Biondi, Curry, Rudnick, and Worthy-Clayton were named as the members of the Ad-Hoc Committee.

Follow-Up

Director Ploehn agreed to check with the Georgetown Project Team on the following: 1) to determine the best manner for receiving input from the Commission; 2) to include the Commission on the e-mail distribution list for the Georgetown Project; and 3) to include the Ad Hoc Committee in the development of the tests.

- Director Ploehn provided the Commission an update on the “Suspicious Packages” that were sent to various DCFS offices. The packages began arriving on November 17, 2008 at different offices. Law enforcement and hazardous materials officers were called and found rat poison with arsenic in the packages. The FBI is conducting an ongoing investigation and to date have no suspects.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November 17, 2008 – Approval of Minutes was held.

VI. UPDATE – SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)

DCFS: Mitch Mason gave a PowerPoint presentation on the SIP, outlining the plan that was approved by the Board of Supervisors and the purpose of the plan. Mr. Mason explained that the SIP is part of a larger plan, the California Outcomes and Accountability System (COAS) that is designed to improve outcomes for children and increase accountability. The SIP is an operational agreement between the County and the State that outlines priorities, defines action steps and establishes specific improvement goals. Another part of the COAS is the Los Angeles County Self-Assessment Report (CSA). Mr. Mason shared the CSA findings which indicated: 1) Most Improved Performance in: a) increase in adoptions within 24 months, b) decrease in median time to reunification, c) decrease in group home placements, and d) increase in percent of children reunified within 12 months; and 2) Reduced Performance in: a) Re-entries following reunification increased, b) children exiting to permanency after 24 months in care decreased.

Mr. Mason indicated that the five focus areas DCFS identified for improved performance are: 1) children reunified within 12 months, 2) re-entry following reunification, 3) adoption within 24 months, 4) exits to permanency (24 months in care), and 5) youth in care 3 years or longer. He described the strategies they will be using to achieve these goals, such as involving family and community in decision making and planning, screening and assessment, improved service delivery, recruiting and supporting caregivers, and protecting children within their own community. Mr. Mason stated that the current SIP was approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 5, 2008 and the timeframe for the SIP is October 2008-September 2011. The SIP will now be tracked and monitored on a quarterly basis, and annual reports will be provided to the State.

Probation: Art Mayfield discussed Probation’s SIP, and the four areas of improvement, which they will concentrate on: 1) improve initial comprehensive case assessments, 2) reduce timelines to permanency, 3) case planning/case management, and 4) quality assurance, policy development and training. The Probation Department strategies include: reduce caseloads, expand the evidence-based practice and functional family therapy to parents and relative/non-relative caregivers, utilize faith-based community and media-based recruitment for foster/adoptive parents, training for Placement Officers and parents and relative/non-relative caregivers, and improve the Placement Permanency & Quality Assurance (PPQA) processes. Mr. Mayfield

stated that the Probation Department will dig deeper regarding reunification issues, tapping into both juvenile and adult systems to share data, and using more of a team approach in engaging families to develop a permanent plan.

Commissioners Curry, Sorkin, and Worthy-Clayton expressed concerns about the apparent lack of current data, follow through, and implementation regarding the DCFS SIP and the lack of clear data.

Commissioner Curry indicated that she would like to see the comparisons between favorable and unfavorable data in an effort to determine whether outcomes and measures are successful. She also expressed major concerns regarding data collection that continuously show only favorable numbers, and not being able to capture the true picture from a global perspective to determine what is actually happening. In particular, Commissioner Curry would like to know how many adoptions have been successful versus how many have failed.

Commissioner Curry also voiced concerns regarding Probation's presentation in terms of actualizing proposed plans that have been voiced for the past five years by several representatives from the Probation Department. Commissioner Curry thanked Mr. Mayfield for his passion and sincerity during his presentation; but asked that he provide assessments, follow-up, actual plans accompanied by timetables that more accurately identify measures/outcomes which are supported by current and factual data. Mr. Mayfield indicated that some cases are cross-overs from DCFS, whereby assessments are conducted by DCFS and that Probation will normally use their assessments to collaborate on the case. In addition, Mr. Mayfield states that the Probation Department staff routinely meets with DCFS staff on a monthly basis, and that the DCFS staff plays a very influential role in assisting the Probation Department to move forward on most of their cases. Commissioner Curry requested that case assessments, measure and outcomes include clients who are placed in the various group homes and camps.

Commissioner Trevino-Powell mentioned on a positive note that the 62% increase reported in adoptions was wonderful, and inquired about the factors that attributed to the increase. Mr. Mason informed the Commission that this was the result of concurrent planning over the past three years and the ability to determine if a child will not return home to their parents. These children are more expediently placed with other resource families to get them ready for adoptive placements.

Commission Sorkin indicated that the information being provided today on adoptions differs from the information provided by Diane Wagner at the May 2008 Commission meeting. With respect to the timeline for adoption completion, Commissioner Sorkin asked whether the 24 month period was based on the date child enters protective services or whether it was based on when the child is free to be adopted. She further indicated that the data provided by Diane Wagner indicated that the timeframe for children is more than 40 months in 2007. Mitch Mason indicated that the goal for adoption completion is 24 months from the time a case is opened.

Commissioner Sorkin also asked about the 2004 SIP which looks in some way similar to the 2008 SIP. She asked whether the 2004 goals were achieved. Mitch Mason stated that some of the 2004 goals were not achieved.

Commissioner Sorkin referred to the 2004 SIP regarding Probation utilizing KinGAP. She asked how many children currently on Probation are on KinGAP. Art Mayfield, from Probation, agreed to obtain this data.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton voiced concern that the presentation seemed to be very similar to one that occurred just a few months prior, and that perhaps, the Commission's request for an update was a little premature and did not allow enough time to update the information or incorporate the new data into the current presentation. In addition, she questioned whether the Stakeholder's input was incorporated into the current presentation. Mr. Mason responded that the input from the Stakeholders was both validated and incorporated into the current presentation. However, the County Self-Assessment (CSA) findings were not updated since the July 2008 presentation.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton recommended that DCFS update today's presentation by including additional data gleaned from suggestions/recommendations received during both the July 2008 Title IV-E LOG and the subsequent special stakeholders' meeting. The Commissioner also recommended that the Commission meeting agenda process be expanded to include, with every request for presentations, a written summary of the specific areas and/or questions the Commissioners wish addressed.

Follow-Up

Both Mitch Mason and Art Mayfield agreed to follow up on the issues raised by the Commission.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

- **Action Regarding Approval of 2007-2008 Annual Report:** This item was held. Commissioner Williams has agreed to work on the Recommendation section.
- **Action Regarding Letter to Miguel Santana Acknowledging Receipt of his letter to the Commission:** The Commission discussed some stylistic, format and content changes to the letter. Clarification was sought regarding the purpose of the letter. The letter is in response to Miguel Santana's October 21, 2008 letter. In addition, we will be confirming his meeting with the Commission on February 2, 2008. It was agreed, that as a response, the letter was fine with some minor changes. At a future time, the Commission agreed to discuss the focus areas and role of the Chief Executive Office with the Commission.

Follow-Up

The Commission agreed to continue the discussion on Commission goals and areas of focus in preparation for their meeting with Miguel Santana, DCEO.

Action

The motion by Commissioner Worthy-Clayton, was seconded by Commissioner Olivas, and unanimously carried, to revise the letter and confine the content to serve merely as a response to Miguel Santana's letter, and approve.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Childhood Obesity: Action Regarding Letter to the Board of Supervisors Regarding Strategies for DCFS and Probation to Address Childhood Obesity:** This item was held.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Marjorie Shelvy, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), spoke regarding relative caregivers continuing to be ignored by the system; they are not receiving funding or support. As a result, claims against the County have increased dramatically for lack of money, services, and Medi-Cal.

Marjorie Shelvy commented on the DCFS presentation that relative caregivers are the orphans of the system and children placed with relatives are routinely denied funding. As evidence to that, the number of administrative hearings held by the Alliance for Children's Rights has increased dramatically causing the Alliance for Children's Rights to double their resources for Hearing Representatives to fight those claims. There is no parity for children placed with relative caregivers as indicated in the DCFS Presentation. In addition, the Title IV-E Waiver states the all children will be funded. However, these children are still currently being denied funding.

Commission Sorkin thanked Ms. Shelvy for bringing this issue to the attention of the Commission. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton requested that this information be reflected in the minutes to enable the Commission to adequately address, follow up and assist in bringing resolutions to this issue.

Follow-Up

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton suggested that the Public Comments be shared with the Relative Care Committee.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

XI. ADJOURN

Commission Chair Sorkin adjourned the meeting.